



HARPER REGAN

BY SIMON STEPHENS



DRAMATISTS
PLAY SERVICE
INC.



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HARPER REGAN premiered at the National Theatre, London in 2008.

The U.S. premiere took place at the Atlantic Theater Company,
New York on October 10, 2012.

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HARPER REGAN received its world premiere on April 23, 2008, at the National Theatre in London, England. It was directed by Marianne Elliott; the production design was by Hildegard Bechtler; the lighting design was by Chris Davey; and the sound design was by Ian Dickinson. The cast was as follows:

| | |
|----------------------|----------------|
| DUNCAN WOOLLEY | Eamon Boland |
| ALISON WOOLLEY | Susan Brown |
| JAMES FORTUNE | Brian Capron |
| MICKEY NESTOR | Jack Deam |
| TOBIAS RICH | Troy Glasgow |
| JUSTINE ROSS | Jessica Harris |
| MAHESH ASLAM | Nitin Kundra |
| ELWOOD BARNES | Michael Mears |
| SARAH REGAN | Jessica Raine |
| HARPER REGAN | Lesley Sharp |
| SETH REGAN | Nick Sidi |

HARPER REGAN was subsequently presented at the Linda Gross Theater by the Atlantic Theater Company (Neil Pepe, Artistic Director; Jeffory Lawson, Managing Director) in New York City, opening on October 10, 2012. It was directed by Gaye Taylor Upchurch; the design was by Rachel Hauck; the costume design was by Sarah J. Holden; the lighting design was by Jeff Croiter; the original music and sound design were by Fitz Patton; the dialect coach was Ben Furey; the violence consultant was J. David Brimmer; the production stage manager was Jillian M. Oliver; and the production manager was Michael Wade. The cast was as follows:

| | |
|----------------------|-------------------------|
| DUNCAN WOOLLEY | John Sharian |
| ALISON WOOLLEY | Mary Beth Peil |
| JAMES FORTUNE | Christopher Innvar |
| MICKEY NESTOR | Peter Scanavino |
| TOBIAS RICH | Stephen Tyrone Williams |
| JUSTINE ROSS | Mahira Kakkar |
| MAHESH ASLAM | Vandit Bhatt |
| ELWOOD BARNES | JordanLage |
| SARAH REGAN | Madeline Martin |
| HARPER REGAN | Mary McCann |
| SETH REGAN | Gareth Saxe |

CHARACTERS

HARPER REGAN

ELWOOD BARNES

TOBIAS RICH

SETH REGAN

SARAH REGAN

JUSTINE ROSS

MICKEY NESTOR

JAMES FORTUNE

ALISON WOOLLEY

DUNCAN WOOLLEY

MAHESH ASLAM

The actor who plays Elwood Barnes might also play Duncan Woolley.

The actor who plays Tobias Rich might also play Mahesh Aslam.

The actor who plays Seth Regan might also play James Fortune.

The actor who plays Sarah Regan might also play Justine Ross.

PLACE

Late autumn of 2006.

TIME

The play takes place in Uxbridge and South Manchester.

HARPER REGAN

Scene 1

Harper Regan and Elwood Barnes.

His office.

The end of a Monday afternoon.

ELWOOD. If you go, I don't think you should come back. *(A terribly long pause. As long as they can get away with. They stand incredibly still.)*

HARPER. I don't know what to say.

ELWOOD. No. *(Pause.)*

HARPER. I need to go home for a few days. *(She waits for him to respond. He doesn't.)* My dad's ill. He's had something called a hypoglycaemic attack. He's gone into a coma. I need to go and see him. I've not seen him, I've not been back home for two years. *(She waits for him to respond. He doesn't.)* I never properly told him how much he meant to me.

ELWOOD. That's not my concern.

HARPER. I've worked for thirty-four weeks without a single day off, not including bank holidays, and I don't think that's reasonable.

ELWOOD. Harper, that's what you're paid to do. That's what everybody does. That's in your contract. *(Pause.)* If it had been any other week. *(He puts his hands in his pockets. Smiles at her. He moves a bit closer to her. She instinctively takes a step back away from him.)*

Harper, do you like it here?

HARPER. I don't know how to answer that.

ELWOOD. Do you like this job?

HARPER. I ...

ELWOOD. It's not a trick question.

HARPER. I like you.

ELWOOD. Thank you.

HARPER. I like working for you.

ELWOOD. Well that's good.

HARPER. Some of the clients are quite friendly.

ELWOOD. Aren't they?

HARPER. I think it's a nice office.

ELWOOD. I think so too.

HARPER. There's a lovely view from your window.

ELWOOD. I like that.

HARPER. You can see Heathrow. You can see Oxford on a good day.

ELWOOD. Three contracts came through on Monday. You know that. *(He moves away from her. He sits down.)*

HARPER. It would only be for a few days. A week at the most.

ELWOOD. We have four days to complete the customs clearance on eight contracts outstanding from the summer. We have to clear the Bill of Lading applications on four others by next Monday. *(He looks at her.)*

HARPER. That's not only my responsibility.

ELWOOD. I can't just let you leave. *(Pause. He looks at her and then looks away.)*

ELWOOD. How's Sarah?

HARPER. She's fine, thank you.

ELWOOD. How old is she now?

HARPER. She's seventeen.

ELWOOD. No!

HARPER. She is. She's at college. She's doing her A levels. She's going to university next year hopefully.

ELWOOD. Poof! A little puff of smoke! Which A levels is she doing?

HARPER. English, Geography and Religious Education.

ELWOOD. Proper subjects! With ideas in!

HARPER. Yes.

ELWOOD. Big ideas. Huge ideas. There is a need for young people to embrace ideas. Young people today, Harper, they lack the energy to properly grapple with big ideas. Don't they? *(She looks at him before she answers.)*

HARPER. I don't know.

ELWOOD. They do. I know they do. I see them all the time. They wait outside Chimes, after it's closed. Their brains vacant from the lack of ideas. Making unusual noises to one another. Talking with their iPods still in. How do they do that?

HARPER. I've no idea. *(He turns back to her.)*

ELWOOD. I like Sarah. She wears remarkable clothes, I seem to remember.

HARPER. I, yes.

ELWOOD. Will you give her my love?

HARPER. I will.

ELWOOD. Does she need a job do you think?

HARPER. I don't know.

ELWOOD. If she does, will you tell her to call me, the second she realises?

HARPER. Yes. I will.

ELWOOD. Do you know what frightens me about our young? *(She looks at him again before she answers.)*

HARPER. What, Mr. Barnes?

ELWOOD. Their amorality. *(He takes a big long pause as he lets this settle in her head.)* Not immorality Harper. Not a wilful inability to act with a moral sense. An absolute absence of the thing in the first place. This is what is starting to infect our young. In England. *(Pause.)* It's your own fault, you know? Do you have the slightest idea how good you are at your job? You've become invaluable. *(She pauses before she speaks.)*

HARPER. Mr. Barnes.

ELWOOD. Elwood. Call me Elwood, Harper, please.

HARPER. Would you mind if I didn't?

ELWOOD. Why?

HARPER. I'd call you by your first name if I thought you were my friend. You're my employer. *(Pause.)* If I don't go I don't know what I'll do. *(He smiles at her. She smiles back weakly.)* I should be getting back.

ELWOOD. Don't.

HARPER. What?

ELWOOD. You have a charming smile Harper. When you answer the telephones, do you smile like that?

HARPER. I don't know.

ELWOOD. I bet you do.

HARPER. I —

ELWOOD. I imagine it has a remarkable impact. It must be why all these contracts keep pouring in. If you stopped smiling like that they'd all dry up, you know? You could have much more holiday. We all could. You could see your dad all the time. You could practically move in with the fucker.

Stay there. Stay exactly there. Sit exactly like that.

HARPER. You're unnerving me a little, Mr. Barnes, I have to say.

ELWOOD. Yes. Now. (*Silence. For thirty seconds.*) Do you feel any better?

HARPER. —

ELWOOD. Do you know what I just did?

HARPER. —

ELWOOD. I counted out thirty seconds. In my head. One little second. Two little seconds. Three little seconds. And so on. That's what I do sometimes. I find a quiet place. To sit and count. It helps. Doesn't it?

HARPER. I'm not sure.

ELWOOD. There aren't many quiet places left now, are there?

HARPER. I quite like the canal.

ELWOOD. There's always a television. There's always a telephone. There's always a radio on. There's always music playing. There's always the Internet, isn't there? Nowadays? Isn't there always the Internet, Harper. There is. There's always the Internet. The human being is a remarkable animal, Harper, don't you think?

HARPER. I —

ELWOOD. It is an exceptional animal. It's the only animal, for example, which runs for pleasure! It's the only animal that does that! It is the only animal that has invented the Internet. What was the last website you looked at, Harper? (*He watches her think.*)

HARPER. There's a website for The Slits that I like.

ELWOOD. The Slits?

HARPER. They're a punk band. I like to find out what they're up to nowadays.

ELWOOD. Do you?

HARPER. I met them once. (*He looks at her. He is completely mystified.*)

ELWOOD. All of my shopping I do online. All of my reading I do online. All of my news I get online. All of my television I watch online. All of my radio I listen to online. I'm perpetually on You-

Tube watching videos of people having mishaps. I am obsessed with sports news. I read chat room after chat room about the English cricket team. I watch a measured amount of porn. Did you know that people can arrange illicit sexual encounters online nowadays? Honestly, Harper. You can go to these places. You can look at these things. This is actually happening. It's mostly men, of course, you have to say that. Men Seek Women. Man Seeking Woman. Man Seeking Two Women. No Strings Attached. I can't get enough of the things. I find them absolutely fascinating. Don't you?

HARPER. I don't know, Mr. Barnes. (*He watches her.*)

ELWOOD. Do you know how many sick days I paid for last year? Twenty-four. Everybody's ill nowadays. Everybody's depressed. Everybody thinks they're ugly. Everybody's addicted to everything. Everybody has this tremendous amount of violence. I find it quite enthralling. It intoxicates me. I watch them all. They all scuttle off on holiday. "Where are you going? I'm going to the seaside! Oh! I'm going to the seaside too! What seaside are you going to? *This* seaside, what seaside are *you* going to? *That* seaside!" (*Pause.*) When the weather gets warm we move towards the water. (*Pause. He stands again.*) I love this country. Don't you? Do you know how many freight vehicles I've got on the motorways of this country right now, at this second? I've got seventeen. They're all over the place. They're going everywhere. By the end of next week I'll have twenty-four. (*She stares at him. She doesn't move or speak.*) Do you know what I particularly love about this country, Harper? (*She stares at him. She doesn't move or speak.*) I love that it's all an accident of geography. The wealth of the place, the wealth of the pile, the mineral wealth of the lump is an accident of physical geography. The industrial revolution was an accident of physical geography. The island isolationism is an accident of physical geography. (*He smiles at her. Turns and looks out of his window. Just when she thinks it's safe to move he starts again.*) And have you ever asked yourself this? Why are there so few motorways east of the M1? Exactly what is happening to the East of England? It's eroding is what's happening. It's falling off. Poor souls. (*He looks back out of the window.*) Sometimes I have rather bleak thoughts. (*He looks at her.*)

ELWOOD. How is Seth?

HARPER. He's fine.

ELWOOD. And the job?

HARPER. It's good. He likes it.

ELWOOD. A good practise?

HARPER REGAN

by Simon Stephens

4M, 3W (doubling)

In her forties, Harper Regan suddenly leaves her family in the suburbs of West London and sets off on a mission to see her father before he dies. Her journey becomes a road trip through the heart of England in this violent and comic exploration of the moralities of sex and death.

"Beautiful, sharp and melancholy ... almost Homeric, an odyssey that seems to embrace all the essential primal acts of life and death, of sex and violence."

—The New York Times

"Profoundly moving ... intimate and wrenching."

—The Chicago Tribune

"Stephens has written arresting plays before this, but HARPER REGAN sends his work into orbit."

—The London Observer

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